nature net

The NatureKenya Newsletter www.naturekenya.org August 04

TALKS & VIDEOS

Life of Mammal Insect Eaters

A BBC Production on mammals like anteaters and shrews, with David Attenbourgh

Mon 9 August '04

5:30 p.m. Louis Leakey Hall, National Museums, Nairobi

Nature & People Fair

Sat 2 & Sun 3 Oct 04

Nairobi Arboretum

A Fair to inspire people about the biodiversity around them

Nature Kenya cammittees and projects are planning live succulent, bird, insect, amphibian and ather displays. The Site Suppart Groups we wark with will set up a butterfly hause, bring woolspinning looms and products, and will have drama performances.

These and many ather activities will take place the first weekend of October at the Arboretum - be sure ta put these dates in yaur diary.

Mare infarmation in the next newsletter!

AUGUST AT A GLIMPSE

Sat 7	ASF Birdwalks & NRF walk
Man 9	Videa-Life af Mammal Insect Eaters
Sat 14	Tree Walk
Sun 15	Sunday Birdwalk
Sat 21 & Sun 22	Ol Danyo Orak trip
Sat 28	Maanzani/Athi River trip
Mon 30	Tree Walk

Birdwalks every Wednesday Marning
Bird ringing every Thursday Marning

Editorial Team

Editor Catherine Ngarachu
Evening Skies Fleur Ng'weno
Naturalist's Corner Dino Martins

FIELD TRIPS

Hiking at Ol Donyo Orok

Sat 21 & Sun 22 Aug '04

Ol Danya Orak is a mauntain an the Kenya - Tanzania barder near the town af Namanga. We meet at the Natianal Museum, Nairobi car park 8:45 a.m.far prampt departure at 9:00 a.m. on Sat 21 . Our base and avernight will be the Namanga River Hatel, which is situated on the faot of the mountain.

Nature Kenya charge: 150/- per persan. B&B cost will be 1000/- per persan sharing (add 300/- for a single room). Children 5 - 12 yrs sharing with parents 500/-. Camping (with hot showers) is 300/- per person. Meals are available from hatel at 260/- breakfast, 400/- lunch, 500/- dinner.

IMPORTANT:
BOOK & PAY RIGHT AWAY !

Succulenta at Maanzoni/Athi River

Sat 28 August '04

Exciting outing to look at Succulents. There is a swimming paal at Maanzoni, so thase feeling hat - bring yaur gear. Also bring lots af drinking water and your picnic. Water is scarce at Maanzani, sa far thase with larger cars a cauple af jerry cans would be welcamed. Please liaise with Sue Allan (891190 ar 0733 891 721) ar Julia Glen (891065 ar 0722 756 647)

The recently completed Wana Funzi Cottages on Swara Plains are available far those who wauld like ta spend the night an the Hapcraft's Ranch at Athi River. Cantact Game Ranching Ltd on 0733 812 556 ar email zuri@wananchi.cam

Training

Identification & Growing of Aloes

11 September '04
with Prof. Len Newton,
from the Kenyatta University Botany Dept.

Organised by the Nairobi Botanic Garden, National Museums of Kenya, this is a one day training @ 1500/-, which includes tea and lunch.

Book and pay at the Nairobi Botanic Garden, tel: 0722 756757

Plan your weekend or other break to stay at the Kinangop Guest House

Perched an the Kinangop Plateau with incredible views acrass the Rift Valley, the farm combines tussack-grass pasture, indigenaus farest, and attractive gardens. The guesthouse is camfortable and fully furnished. Visitars can enjay hikes and walks an the farm ar ga further afield with local guides.

Far mare infarmatian, brachure and non-member rates please cantact Nature Kenya.

Guest House rates: Day visit 350/-

MEMBER nos	Overnight	Weekend
1 ta 2 pax	4000/-	6500/-
3	4,900/-	7,400/-
4	5,800/-	8,300/-

NATURE KENYA, P. O. Box 44486, 00100 GPO Nairobi Tel: 3749957 / 3746090 Fax: 3741049 E-mail: office@naturekenya.org

action

GRASSROOTS

Youth Group at the Mt Kenya Eco-Resource Centre site

in front of the Eco-resource Centre

Nature Kenyo is building an eco-centre to provide biologicol, geogrophicol and culturol information on Mt Kenya ond establish a network of concerned individuals and institutions.

All the masonery ond roofing work hos now been completed. On 11 - 13 June 2004 the Youth Committee undertook landscoping ot the building site and started o checklist of plant and bird species in the oreo.

hard at work

It was on opportunity to interact with the local community and share with the Mt Kenyo Biodiversity Conservotion Group (the local Site Support Group).

Fundroising is ongoing ond any donotions towords completing the remaining work is most welcome.

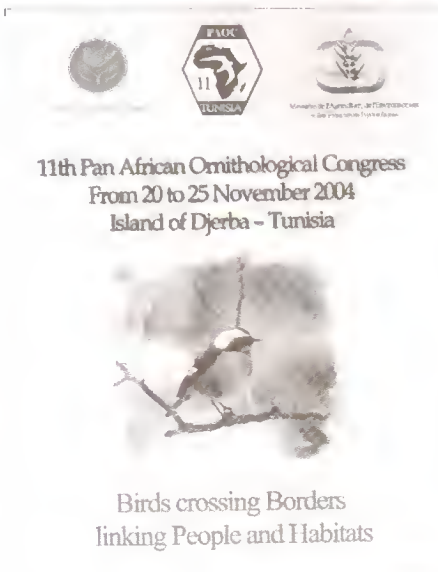
with members of the community

THE KENYA POLLINATORS INITIATIVE

A GATHERING OF PEOPLE INTERESTED IN ALL ASPECTS OF POLLINATION – INCLUDING RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION

POLLINATORS ARE AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF FOOD SECURITY AND THE CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY. KENYA IS RICH IN POLLINATING ANIMALS THAT PROVIDE THE CENTRAL SERVICE OF POLLINATION TO ALL ECOSYSTEMS. INSECT POLLINATORS ARE ALSO KEY TO AGRICULTURE AND MANY CROPS RELY ON POLLINATION. FOR MORE INFORMATION, AND TO ATTEND, PLEASE CONTACT DR GIDEON NYAMASYO.

Email. gnyamasyo@uonbi.ac.ke
Tel: 0722-874-591
FAX: 020-4445763,
P. O. Box 30917, Nairobi
THE MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE ON THE 11 AUGUST 2004



11th Pan African Ornithological Congress 20 to 25 Nov 2004 Djerba, Tunisia

Closing date for Registration: 30 Aug 04
Email aao.bird@planet.tn

The PAOC meets every four years to discuss biology, ecology and conservation of African birds.It is an opportunity to exchange experience and information, networking and review progress of African Ornithology.

Open to anyone interested in African birds.

CLASSIFIEDS

Birding at the ABERDARES

Sat 14 & Sun 15 Aug '04

Depart Nairobi on Saturday stopping at Mwea or Thiba paddy fields. Lunch at Wajee Camp. Dinner and overnight Aberdares Fishing Lodge. On Sunday morning, game drive and bird watch (also other activities like fishing). Return through Kinangop grasslands and other birding hotspots; arrive Nairobi late evening.

Kshs 3,600.00 per person with **minimum 8 pax (4 confirmed already).** To book call **BEN'S ECOLOGICAL SAFARIS** Tel/Fax: 254-02-3755290/1, Mobile: 254-722861072, Email: info@bensecologicalsafaris.com

Moon

8 Last quarter, 16 New moon, 23 First quarter, 30 Full moon.

Stars

Scorpius is at its best viewing this month. This constellation really resembles a scorpion, with bright stars defining the head shape and more stars forming the curving body and tail, all the way to the bright star Shaula in the tip of the sting, the likeness is amazing! Have a look first thing in the evening before it has climbed so high as to require excessive neck craning to see it. (As our Earth rotates towards the east, the stars appear to move slowly westward across the night sky.)

Look for an unusually bright object with a white or bluish colour rising in the east-northeast. This is the star Vega in the constellation of Lyra, the lyre. The constellation Centaurus, the Centaur, including two brilliant stars, is directly south. Draco the Dragon, a winding line of stars, is directly north, and the golden-orange star Arcturus is in the northwest.

Planets

Mercury is visible for the first half of August, low over the sunset, before it disappears into the glare of the sun. Bright Jupiter is also setting in the west, but at a slower rate.

Venus is brilliant in the eastern sky before dawn. Saturn, much less bright, is also rising in the east, and appears very close to Venus at month's end.

Other info

13th Aug Saturn south of Moon
16th Aug Mars south of Moon
18th Aug Jupiter south of Moon
24th Aug Antares south of Moon
31st Aug Venus just south of Saturn in the early morning sky

Bird Hotline

3749957

(July Sighting)

Lesser Sandplovers *L.Nakuru* Fleur Ng'wena, Bridget Karanja, Rufus De Casta, Edith Wanjiru & John Kuria

Scaly Chatterers *Magadi Road* Shailesh Patel, Bernard Chege & Itai Shanni

Spotted Ground Thrush *Arabuka Sakake Forest* Fleur Ng'wena & David Ngala

NATURALIST'S CORNER

Amphibians

By JACOB MUETI
mngwava@yahoo.com

Amphibians were the earliest land vertebrates to evolve. Their presence in an area is an indication of a safe environment, conducive to other creatures. The world populations of amphibians have declined markedly, a situation that calls for urgent attention.

Frogs and toads are good weather forecasters. Their calls and other behaviour can indicate an impending rain season. Amphibians were used in the first pregnancy test. Today some of the most efficient painkillers are derived from toxins extracted from frogs. In some communities, such as the Okiek or Dorobos, the toxins from toads are mixed with certain herbs and applied to arrowheads as a poison.

The amphibian slump will automatically disrupt the food chain at certain levels. For instance some snakes and birds, such as Hamerkops, feed on frogs and toads. Frogs in turn feed on algae and insects particularly mosquito larvae, helping in malaria control.

Today fewer amphibians are in evidence, compared to what was observed a decade ago. Where rivers pass through urban areas, and soluble toxic chemical compounds get in the water, they deplete the oxygen consequently limiting organisms that need dissolved oxygen to survive.

Amphibians are also dependent on water for reproduction. Amphibians deposit myriads of eggs (in chains for toads and in masses for frogs) on water where they are accorded little or no parental care. After hatching, the tadpoles fend for themselves. The young toads and frogs can be seen at the edges of ponds and streams.

A recent evening frogging trip to a pond in the Runda estate in Nairobi by members of the Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force-Kenya (DAPTF), revealed a diversity of frogs. It is possible to identify frogs from their calls. Calls are species specific. Just like birds, frogs can be accurately identified from their calls, even to the species level.

Three different frog species (*Hyperolius acuticeps, H. viridiflavus, ferniquei,* and *Ptychadena mascareniensis*) were identified at the pond in Runda. The intensity of calling points to a relatively high abundance of amphibians in the area. This is encouraging news, given that this is just a small pond in a suburban area.

regular activities

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRDWALKS

Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. *Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Ksh 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.*

BIRD RINGING

Meet at the Museums' Nairobi Botanic Garden, at 7:00 a.m. every Thursday.

SUNDAY BIRDWATCH

Members meet at the National Museum, Nairobi car park at 9:00 a.m. the third Sunday of every month, **i.e. 15 August**. The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

TREE WALKS

Guided tree walks in the Arboretum on the second Saturday and last Monday, i.e. **14 & 30 August from 9:30 a.m.** Meet at the Arboretum gate. *Those who are not members of FONA or Nature Kenya pay Ksh 100/- fee on arrival at the gate.*

Ngong Road Forest Walks (Nairobi)

The Ngong Road Forest Sanctuary Trust Nature walks are held on the first and third Saturdays of the month i.e. **7 & 21 August, at 9:00 a.m.** Meet at the stairs leoding to the Restaurant at the Racecourse.

FFJ Bird Walk (Coast)

Friends of Fort Jesus birdwalks are held the third Saturday of each month, i.e. **21 August** Please call Marlene Reid on (041) 491 648 to confirm

ARABUKO-SOKOKE (COAST)

The Saturday birdwatch with the Arabuko Sokoke Forest Guides Association is on the first Saturday of each month i.e. **7 August, at 6:30 a.m.** from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person. KWS fees now apply (100/- Citizens, 500/- Residents)

Lake Victoria Sunset Birders (Kisumu)

The Lake Victoria Sunset Birders are a Nature Kenya Site Support Group and organise bird walks at sites in and around Kisumu every Friday of the month. For further details call 035 42952 or email wck@vicweb.net

DECLARATION

Nature Kenya does not accept any responsibility whatsoever in respect of negligence of any of its staff, volunteers or members organising the outings/trips or for any loss, injury, death or damage to property.

Asha Owano
Chief Librarian, NMK
by
HAND
B h c j x

Nature *Kenya*

Membership form

Yes! *Start* *Renew*

my Nature Kenya membership

MAILING ADDRESS (BLOCK LETTERS)

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First Name Ms/Mr/Title

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(OPTIONAL - but useful to us in planning)

Occupation

Age Bracket (tick) under 21( ) 21-35( ) 36-50( ) over 50( )

Country of Origin

Would you like us to share your contacts Yes/ NO

For Official Use Only Sub No. Recpt. No.

Mode Due Date Recpt Date

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Scopus (Ornithological Journal)	500	
World Birdwatch (the BirdLife International magazine)	1500	
Succulenta East Africa	400	
Friends of Nairobi Arboretum		
Single - 400/-, Student - 250/-, School or Club - 800/-		
DONATIONS ***Help us to do even more!***		
5000/-8000/ Other		
Total		

If you live reside outside of Kenya please refer to www.naturekenya.org